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ABSTRACT

Florida and Texas have tied evaluation of preservice teacher programs to performance measures. These reforms may have an impact on the functioning of teacher education programs within their institutions of higher education (IHE's). In 1996, Florida's State Board of Education adopted the Florida Education Standards Commission's (ECS) Recommendation on Performance Standards for Continuing Program Approval of Preservice Teacher Education Programs. This includes five indicators or performance standards for continuing preservice program approval: candidate demonstration of knowledge and skills upon preservice completion; successful performance on the Florida Teacher Certification Examination; inclusion of program components mandated by state statute or rule; diversity of enrollment in preservice programs; and satisfaction of employing districts with beginning teachers. Initial program approval for IHE's involves submitting curriculum folios for each program then completing an on-site review by the Department of Education Board of Regents and NCATE. Once approved, programs must undergo continued review and approval. The Texas system of preservice program evaluation is the ASEP (Accountability System for Educator Preparation), which includes two components. The first is a set of state generated exams which must be active by late 1998. The second is a performance evaluation that must be active by 2002. The performance evaluation states that poor performance by any subgroup of students, even if overall scores are acceptable, puts the institution or program under review. In both states, these standards will ensure that IHE's be treated similarly by the state boards. (SM)

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State Evaluation of Teacher Preservice Programs

Texas and Florida

AN ISSUE PAPER BY:

DAN LAITSCH

FEBRUARY 1998

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State Evaluation of Teacher Preservice Programs

Texas and Florida

by Dan Laitsch

Concerns about the quality of beginning teachers entering the classroom have led several states to look at the effectiveness of teacher preservice programs at institutions of higher education (IHE). This scrutiny has taken many forms: from the creation of new teaching licensure and professional standards boards, to program approval reforms and exit testing of program graduates. Florida and Texas in particular have tied the evaluation of teacher preservice programs to performance measures. The preservice program evaluation reforms enacted by these two states are expected to have a significant impact on the functioning of teacher education programs within the state's institutions of higher education.

State Policy

Florida

On September 7, 1996, the State Board of Education adopted the Florida Education Standards Commission's (ESC) *Recommendation on Performance Standards for Continuing Program Approval of Preservice Teacher Education Programs.*[1] The ESC identified five indicators or performance standards for continuing preservice program approval:

1. Candidate demonstration of knowledge and skills at the point of preservice completion
2. Successful performance on the Florida Teacher Certification Examination
3. Inclusion of program components mandated by state statute or rule
4. Diversity of enrollment in preservice programs
5. Satisfaction of employing districts with beginning teachers

Standard One refers to the Preprofessional Competencies defined by the ECS. There are twelve of these competencies, which remain constant (though differing in their indications) as teachers pass through the three levels: preprofessional, professional, and accomplished. These twelve areas are: Assessment, Communication, Continuous Improvement, Critical Thinking, Diversity, Ethics, Human Development and Learning, Knowledge of Subject Matter, Learning Environments, Planning, Role of the Teacher, and Technology.[2]

Standard Two requires that 80 percent of the students in each teacher education program "will pass the CLAST (College Level Academic Skills Test), and the Professional Education and Subject Matter subtests of the Florida Teacher Certification Examination."[3] Failure to meet the 80 percent target for two successive years will result in an automatic review of program approval (it should be noted that a sliding scale is used for small programs, so that an institution will not necessarily be in violation of this standard if one of four students taking the test fails).

Standard Three requires IHEs to comply with program components required by State Statute or Rule. This includes prescribed programs such as Clinical Education, Essential Competencies, and Preservice Preparation.

Standard Four focuses on student diversity in preservice programs. Each program is required to increase both the number of minority students, and the number of students in underrepresented groups (appropriate to an institution's mission) over specific five year periods.

The final standard, Standard Five, requires that 90 percent of program graduates who complete their first year, be rehired, or eligible for rehiring in the event of a downsizing. This standard also allows programs to create additional evaluation criteria for employing districts to use,

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With reviews by SCAS, NCATE, and the Florida Department of Education, and (for state schools) the Board of Regents, there is no question that the standards for accreditation of education programs are rigorous...The collaborative approach, which provides for the use of one set of general standards, provides for a manageable system for review with the flexibility to meet the needs of diverse programs.

Sandra Robinson
Dean, College of Education
University of Central Florida

such as teachers receiving awards or receiving promotions to mentoring roles.

Policy Application:

There is a two step process for initial program approval for IHEs. In Phase I, IHEs submit curriculum folios for each program (focusing on program design, content, delivery and evaluation). Phase II is an on-site review by the Department of Education, the Board of Regents, and NCATE, designed as a follow up to the folio review, as well as a way to look at students and graduates, faculty, governance, facilities, and resources. Once approved, each program must under-go continued review and approval. Twenty-eight Florida institutions have gone through this process and are now in the next phase of program review (seeking continued review and approval).

To maintain program approval, IHEs must develop an Institutional Program Evaluation Plan (IPEP). This plan explains how the institution plans to meet the five standards identified by the Education Standards Commission. The IPEP is also used to report data that the institution has collected in evaluating their success in meeting these standards. At the end of each evaluation period (five years) the programs will be evaluated by the Department of Education. This review process incorporates the test results, however; test results can also effect the program independently.[4]

The first formal data were gathered in December 1997, so at present there are no institutions in automatic review. December 1998 will be the first time complete figures for two consecutive years are gathered.

Texas

The Texas system of preservice program evaluation is the ASEP (Accountability System for Educator Preparation). This program affects 96 certification programs in the state (regular or alternative, offered in public or private settings), and is split into two components. The first component is a set of state generated exams while the second component is a performance evaluation. The legislature had mandated that both parts of the assessment be active as of September, 1998, however; the performance evaluation section has been delayed until the year 2002.[5]

The final section (performance standards) of the testing component is currently before the Texas State Board for Educator Certification. Final passage is scheduled for March ninth. Once approved, the program will require that 70 percent of students from a program pass the ExCET (Exam for Certification of Educators in Texas) the first time the tests are taken, or 80 percent pass the tests within a two year period. The scores will be examined along total group, ethnic, and gender lines, with the total group, and each ethnic/gender group being required to score above the first year 70 (or second year 80) percent target on the tests. Poor performance by a subgroup, even if the overall scores are accept-

All Texas programs, whether university-based or alternative routes, must be held accountable for the same standards on similar "playing fields."

James L. Williamson
Interim Dean, School of Education
Baylor University

able, would put the institution or program under review. The scores evaluated would apply to individual certifications such as English, as well as to entire certification programs, so that an entity may find itself under review in English or Biology, but not at institutional risk. The tests as a whole, however, contain sections on both pedagogy and subject matter. Programs under review that have less than ten students in a tested student group may appeal the review to the executive director of the State Board for Educator Certification.

Once the current proposal is passed, effective in September 1998, programs that score below the target figures for the current period (1997 - 98) will be designated as Accredited-Under Review. These programs will then enter a two step assistance process. In the first step an oversight team will visit the program and make recommendations designed to bring the program into compliance with the ASEP standards. The funding of this oversight team, as well as the implementation of remedies, will be the burden of the institution. The school is given one year with the assistance of the technical assistance team to raise their students' scores. If, after that one year, the institution has not met the ASEP standards, the executive director of the State Board for Educator Certification will appoint a person to administer the program or entity for the next two years. If test scores are still below acceptable levels at the end of the second year, as of September 1, the next academic year, the institution would lose its approval to recommend individuals for licensure. At the end of three more years, the institution could apply to resume offering the certification programs as if they were a new institution (Accredited - Preliminary Status). Based on recent scores, between 14 and 19 of the 96 preservice programs in Texas, would be in danger of loosing their approval to train teachers.

Impact on IHEs

The ultimate impact of preservice evaluation reforms on the education programs in Texas and Florida is difficult to determine, however; a report prepared by the Texas Higher Education Board, found that more than one third of the Texas IHEs in jeopardy are classified as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), although, state-wide, HBCU's account for less than ten percent of all preservice programs.

> Texas deans of education recognized for some years the need for a strong system of common rules for accountability in the preparation of educators, and it was those deans who urged the new State Board for Educator Certification to develop the Accountability System for Educator Preparation.
>
> *Allen R. Warner*
> *Dean, College of Education*
> *University of Houston*

Another concern for Texas is the short amount of time the preservice entity is given to raise scores. The reform process can also be very expensive, and the Texas and Florida plans do not allocate additional funding to IHEs under review. In fact, in Texas, the IHEs carry the entire financial cost of reform, including the financing of the oversight teams.

The two year time frame places stronger institutions in uncertain waters as well. If an institution whose students have historically performed well on these exit tests has a drop in test scores one year, there is no time given to determine if the drop was the result of an institutional deficiency, or was only a temporary anomaly. With only two years to raise scores, the institution cannot afford to wait and see how the next class performs. Florida has provided more consistency for institutions in the state by reviewing averages for two consecutive years before program approval becomes an issue, however; test results can still prove to be the sole cause for an institution losing program approval. Immediate program review will occur after two consecutive years of unacceptable scores, even if employing districts are satisfied with their new hires, the institution maintains a diverse population, teachers perform well on the Educator

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> **A major problem exists in Florida - a double standard for the licensure of teachers. Many "shortcut" routes, which are not monitored, exist.**
>
> *Sandra Robinson*
> *Dean, University of Central Florida*

Accomplished Practices, and all mandated classes are provided. Currently, Florida programs have completed the initial program approval phase, and no institutions are in jeopardy of having program approval revoked. The second consecutive test will be administered next year (1998), and the effects of the testing program will become more clear at that time.

In both states, these standards will ensure that institutions of higher education will be treated similarly by the state boards. Deans contacted in both Texas and Florida were generally supportive of the new measures, however; concerns were expressed about the certification of teachers from outside of the state systems. Teachers entering the profession from other states, or who obtain alternative certifications from within Texas or Florida, may not be evaluated as rigorously as teachers coming from the state's IHEs. Creating standards for IHEs may do much to "level the playing field", but states must also work to ensure that all teachers entering the field are qualified.

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Texas Department of Education homepage -
http://www.tea.texas.gov/

ASEP homepage - http://www.sbec.state.tx.us/

Notes:

[1]*Recommendations on Performance Standards for Continuing Program Approval of Preservice Teacher Education Programs*, Florida Education Standards Commission Information Bulletin

[2]*Educator Accomplished Practices* - Competencies for Teachers of the Twenty-First Century, Florida Education Standards Commission

[3]*Recommendations on Performance Standards for Continuing Program Approval of Preservice Teacher Education Programs*, Florida Education Standards Commission Information Bulletin

[4]Response to a questionnaire submitted to Barbara Harrell, Office of Professional Training Services, Florida Department of Education, November, 1997

[5]Phone interview conducted November 10, 1997, Pam Tackett, Texas State Board for Educator Certification

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